

Note: This is an ebook approximation of a one-of-a-kind (unique) hand printed book that was made and bound in 2007. The book is both of historical and artistic merit. Because it is a unique book which presently lives with me and my wife, I have decided to widely distribute this approximation free of charge. This 2018 version was made from the original files used to print the 2007 book. Everything that appears in the printed book appears in this digital version. An earlier digital approximation was made in 2009, but that version was not made from the original files used to make the printed version of the book.

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Norman Breslow, 3/14/2018.

Norman Breslow

Photographs, Art and Remembrances
1958-2007

This book was hand printed by Norman Breslow
and
Hand bound by Charlene Matthews, Los Angeles

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First printing

When I was four years old, my mother asked me what I wanted for my birthday. I didn't know I was having one. Without hesitation, I said I wanted a camera. A few days later she gave me my first camera, a Kodak Brownie Hawkeye.

I've decided that my life-long fascination with photography is due simply to random brain wiring. When I was twelve, I told my mother I didn't want to go to summer camp again, but wanted to go to the New York Institute of Photography, a school (of sorts) that advertised in the photo magazines I read every month. I didn't understand much of what I read, and I wanted to know more than I did. My mother told me she thought they wouldn't take me, because I was too young. I persisted, so she took me for an interview. Mother didn't understand that NYI would take anyone of any age, even a blind person, if they could afford to pay them. We could.

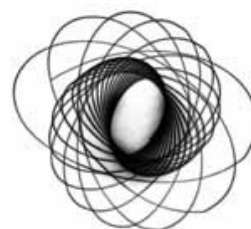
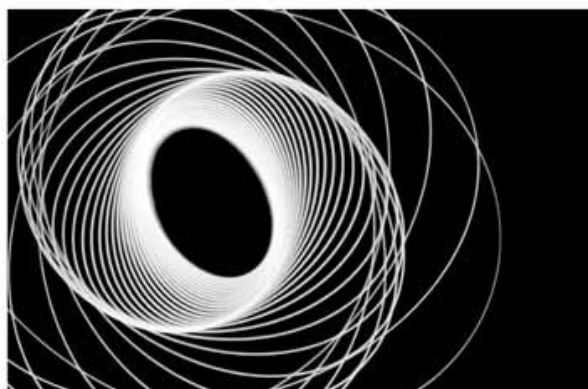
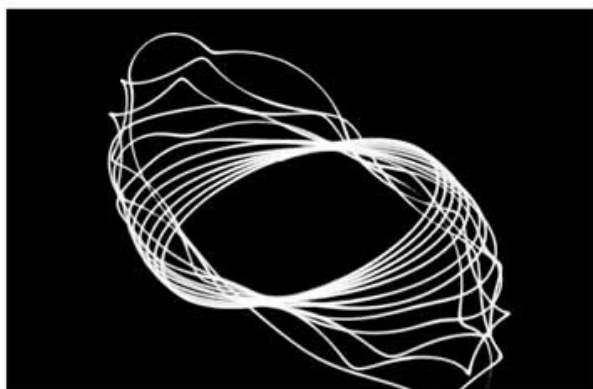
That summer I learned some basics of photography. Enough to be better able to understand what I read in my photo magazines. When I was fifteen I made this self portrait, which is the earliest picture I made that is still in existence. I shot it with my Pratikaflex aimed at my bedroom mirror which hung on my closet door.

A year later I made the "light photos" on the next page. I must have read an article describing how to make them. I bought a small penlight flashlight and suspended it from a string I attached to my ceiling, and in a dark room at night I gave the penlight a push. With the camera on the floor pointing at the light, I made a long exposure. After taking a roll of film of the moving penlight, I took the film to the local pharmacy, where I had my film sent out to be developed and printed. A week later, when the film was due to be picked up, the pharmacist told me that no prints were made, because nothing came out on the film. I looked at the negatives, and showed him that there was something, and I wanted the negatives printed. He refused. Since he was a grown-up, and I was only sixteen, he won. I was disappointed, but soon forgot about the pictures.

When I started to put this book together, I found the negatives in a box of "stuff". I scanned them and printed them, and for the first time in 48 years I saw the photos the pharmacist refused to have printed. Kinda neat, at least for a first try by a sixteen year old.

Looking back on it, most of my photography involves experimentation, trying to see what I could do that was different from what other photographers, and later other artists, did.





Negative of light drawing on the left

In 1964, when I was 21, and wanting desperately to get away from my family, and not having much direction in my life, I went to the library and found *Lovejoy's College Guide*. I thumbed through it, looking for colleges that taught photography. There were only a few that offered a degree in photography, and most of them were close to New York. They wouldn't do because they were too close to home. One that caught my eye was the Art Center College of Design, located in Los Angeles, which offered a Bachelor's degree in photography, and their admissions policy was rated as "highly competitive", which meant that they didn't just take anyone, like NYU. Most important of all, they were 3,000 miles away from home.

I wrote them and they sent a brochure and application forms. Besides my high school transcripts etc., they wanted me to send a portfolio of my pictures. I didn't have one, so I started to put a portfolio together. I went around New York City taking pictures, and my mother paid the fee for me to rent darkroom time from photographers who made some extra money that way. What little I learned at NYU and what I read in the photo magazines was all I had to work with.

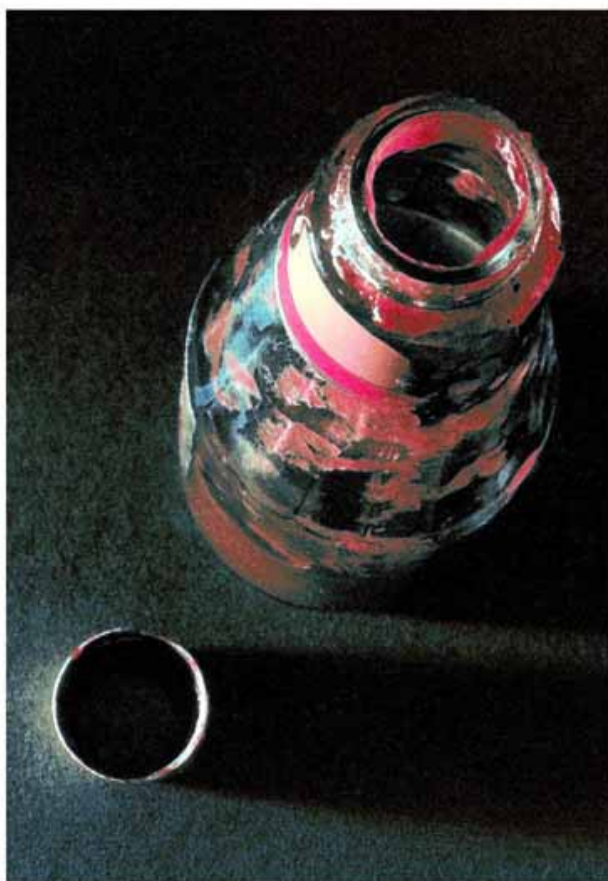
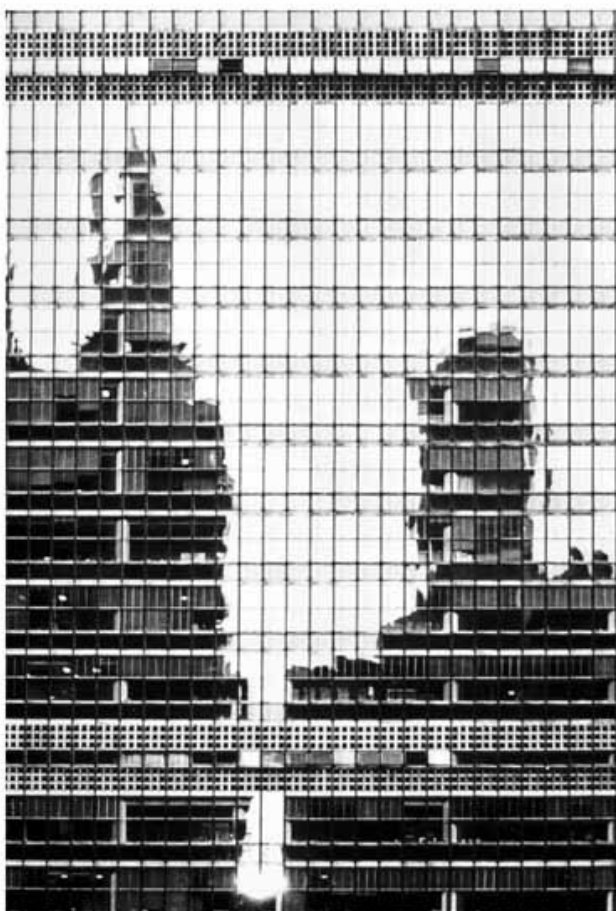
The only surviving picture from that portfolio is the one on the next page. I found it as a slide, made from the original print, in the same box my light drawings were in. The picture is of the reflections on the glass of the United Nations building. I digitized the slide for this book. So the picture on this page is 5th generation- (1) the original negative (2) the original print (3) the slide of the print (4) the digital file of the slide and (5) finally this print. Alas, many of the images in this book, at least most of those made before the year 2000, are third, fourth or fifth generation images.

Art Center accepted me, and that was one of the major turning points in my life. Art Center was, and still is, overly design oriented. Not only are the students expected to be technical experts in their craft by the time they graduate, but they are also supposed to know and follow the rules of design as laid down by the school. As for any image on a page, there is a place for everything, and everything must be in its place. Or Else!

Looking back on my few surviving Art Center photos, I can see that I was rather rebellious, as you will see. But I did follow their rules enough of the time that I did graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. More than a few of the other students in my entering class were asked to leave, usually for either not being creative enough, or not being technically proficient. Or both. I did have my run-ins with the powers-that-be, but I must say that I value my Art Center education. Although I fought them (almost) every step of the way, they taught me how to think and how to solve problems.

With that said, my problem with Art Center was/is that their images don't have a soul. They look like they popped out of a machine. They don't look like a human being was involved with their creation or execution. **THEY DON'T HAVE FINGERPRINTS ON THEM.** I like art, and photographs, and just about everything else, that have fingerprints on them. Images and things that don't look perfect, and show that a person made them. My art to this day have fingerprints on them. This of course doesn't attract a large following of art directors, interior decorators, and those lacking creativity in the fine art world. I find just about all of the above to be **dull**.

I attended Art Center from 1965 to 1968. The photos that follow for the next few pages are from 1965-1970. Some pictures are of friends or people I knew at that time, while others were done for school assignments or for my own amusement/education. A few brief comments will be found sprinkled here and there.



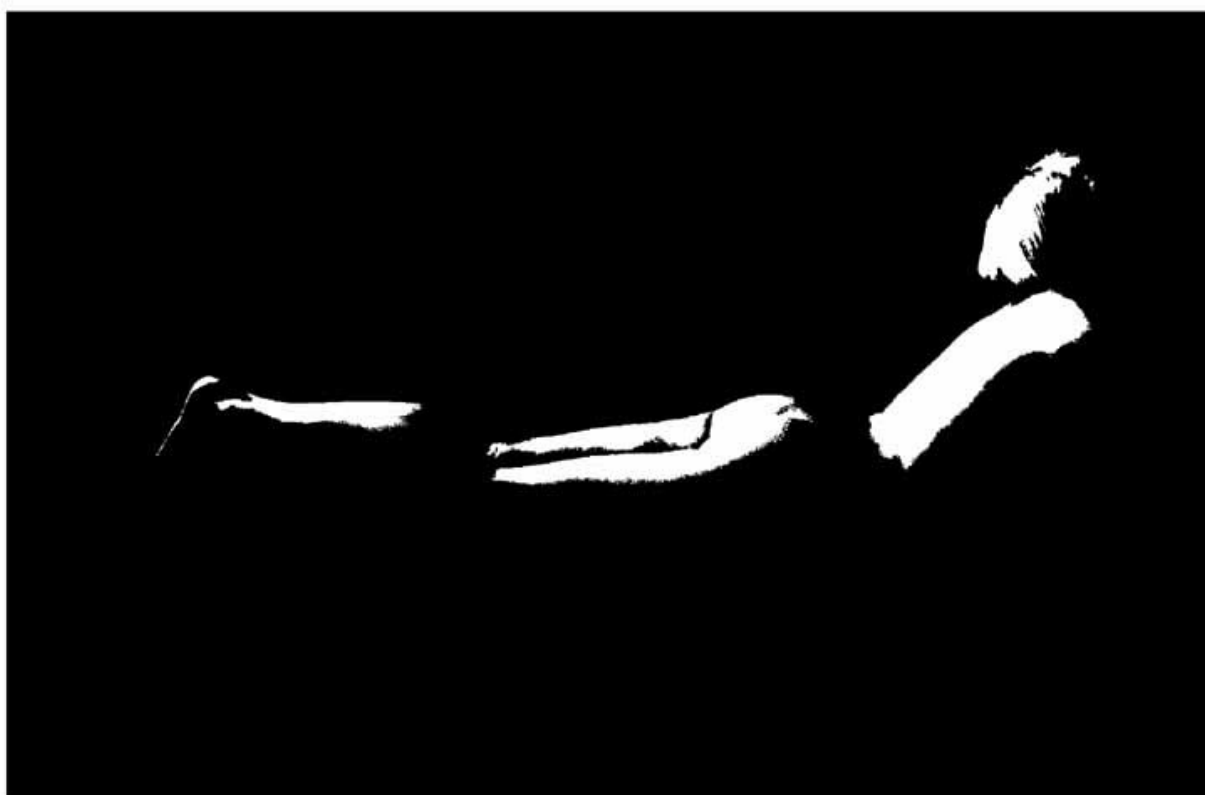
Not exactly a standard product shot. And they let me graduate?



The photo students at Art Center were ingenious, and we all shared our discoveries with each other. One technique involved using "just the right" colored filters to expose the different light sensitive layers of color film, one at a time. If the camera didn't move, anything that did move would become colorful. I made this photo just for fun. Today, something like this is easy to do with a computer, but 'way back in the '60s, this was amazing.



Not your typical yummy bunch of fruit shot. I do remember the teacher I did this still life for asking me which design student arranged the fruit. I told him I did it all by myself. He was pleasantly surprised.







A snapshot of one of the guys I hung out with around 1967. The "swirl" effect was created by putting a piece of aluminum foil inside a cardboard tube from toilet paper, and shooting through the tube. The photo on the right was shot in an alley on the way to his home.



This is Doug. I met him in 1966 when I pulled into a Texaco gas station. He recognized my Art Center parking sticker, and introduced himself. He told me he was an art student at Chanard's, a fine art college. He was the first "hippy freak" I met. He introduced me to a gaggle of other drugged out freaks, who became my good friends during the 1970's.

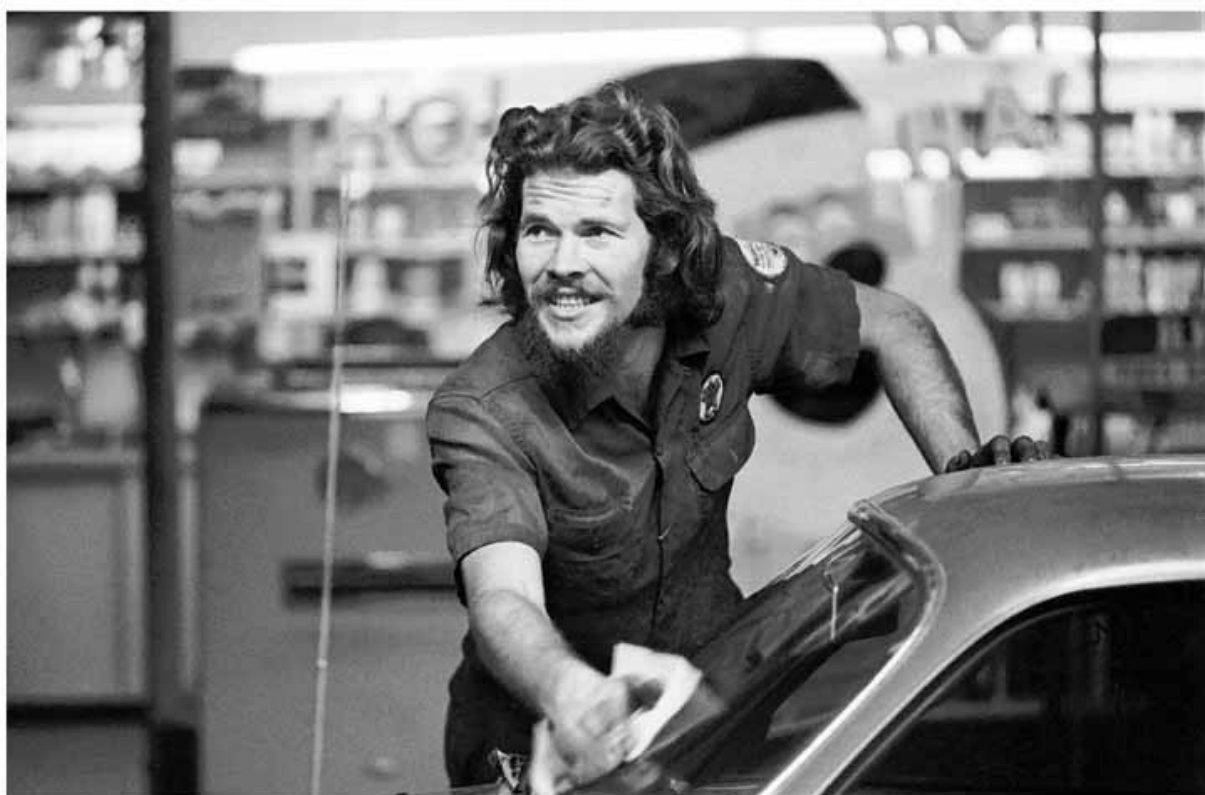
The first time I saw him I knew I HAD to photograph him. You see, the most popular early TV show in the 1950's was the Milton Berle show. It was a variety type show sponsored by Texaco. Their live commercials featured some singing and dancing guys dressed in Texaco uniforms. Part of their song went, "Trust your car to the man who wears the star, the big red Texaco star". Doug's image and their image were polar opposites. So I returned to that gas station a few days later with my camera, and took this picture, and the one on the next page.

Over the years I lost contact with the hippy freak artists I met through Doug. I did run into one of them sometime in the late 1980's, and I asked about the old gang. He told me that Doug went to a party and got into a fight with two guys, and tossed both of them off a second floor balcony. I don't doubt it, because Doug was an ex paratrooper, and kinda crazy...

Anyway, the two guys sued him because they hurt their feet in the fall, and won a judgement against Doug. So he put everything he owned in his girlfriends name, (which wasn't much) and packed up his stuff and headed for Northern California. He hasn't been heard from since.

Too bad. Although he was probably certifiably crazy, he was a nice guy.







Doug and his girlfriend Barbara in 1967. She was working on her Ph.D. in art history at UCLA. These photos were shot in his studio, where they lived. It was a tin or whatever hut in an industrial park, and must have been 120 degrees F in the summer. They filled the bathtub by boiling water on their stove. Since this took a few hours, they gave real meaning to the term, "Saturday night bath".



Doug spent a year or so sculpting this still incomplete dragon out of wood. It's huge- about five feet across at it's widest point. I wonder if he managed to take it with him.

In 1969, I shot this snapshot of Nancy waking up from a nap she was taking in my apartment. About a year after this picture was taken, we got briefly married.

Nancy was an advertising design student at Art Center. When we got married she was an art director at a major advertising agency. She, like all of my wives, was a Saint, and much too good for me.

Above her head is a painting Doug did of me. He did it with a two inch wide house painter's brush, and used house paint. It took him about five minutes. Maybe that's the way I really looked, or just looked to him because he was high on some combination of hallucinogenics. Or maybe both.

Nancy helped me make the photo of the butterfly, which really is a photo of nothing but light. I had the idea, but not the skills needed to make it, so I asked Nancy for help. I told her I wanted her to cut holes out of black pieces of paper, and when each hole was shot on the same piece of film, each with a different colored filter over the lens, the resulting composite would look like something recognizable. Nancy decided to make the "something" look like a butterfly.

After she cut holes in paper, I put them, one at a time, on a light box I had built, and took a series of pictures of the light coming through the holes, with different filters over the lens. So, the picture of the butterfly is really a picture of nothing that exists.





This is a snapshot of Tom, another one of my friends during the 1960's. He was an Art Center advertising major. The picture was made at a party just after he graduated in 1969. He had the professional "Art Center" look, as his dress shirt and tie show.

After he graduated he started working as a freelance art director for low budget movies. I kept in contact with him for a few years by telephone. One day, when I was particularly bummed out over something or other, I called and asked him "Why do some people seem to do so well in life, and others, like me, don't?" He replied, without missing a beat, "They have to. They're majoring in three dimensional reality. I'm just auditing this class." I liked that answer so much I've never forgotten it, and think of it from time to time, even after all these years.

Around 1972 I was taking a walk around the Venice beach area of Los Angeles. It was summer and lots of people were out and about, and I spent some time taking pictures just for my own amusement, and for use in the art I was doing at the time. I bumped into Tom. He told me he changed his name to something like TomEtoe. But he said that I could still call him Tom, since I knew him from before.

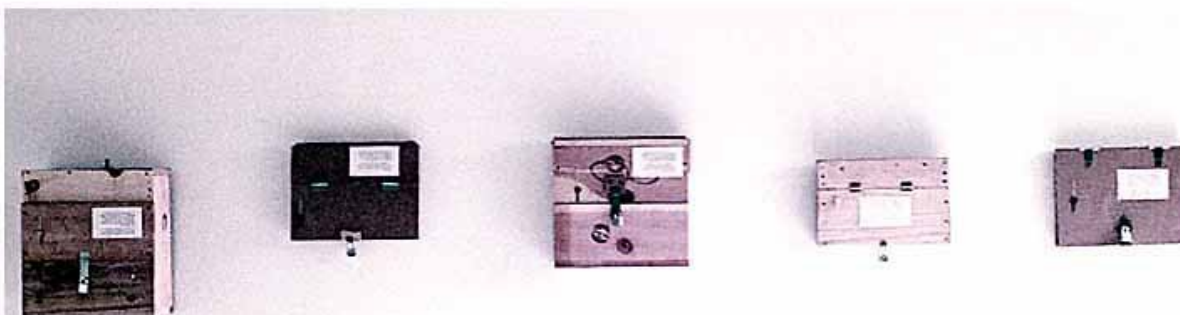
That was the last time I saw or heard from him. I took some pictures of his new look. I wonder if working in Hollywood for a few years does that to people, or just to Tom,





Getting a bit bored with photography, or more accurately, with the type of visuals I was doing, I tried my hand at painting. This one was made on a wooden box, with thick acrylics and glazes and whatever, in 1974.





I suppose my painting on boxes led to a completely different series which also involved boxes. This very poor quality photo is the only one I have of boxes I made over a period of about three years. What happened to the boxes is a long and unpleasant story. There is one box that I know was still in existence during the mid 1990s. I'll leave that story for later.

The boxes were designed to be ugly, and have my fingerprints all over them. They are the polar opposite of my Art Center training. They were made out of the ugliest wood I could find. I literally found them on the loading docks of supermarkets at night. They were apple crates and orange crates which were being thrown out. The wood was the cheapest wood ever made, I'm sure.

I took the crates apart, and remade them into my boxes. I put something, sometimes a photograph, and sometimes an object, into them. I then locked the box and put a key on a string far enough from the lock so it would have to be broken from its location to use it to open the box. Finally, I attached a brief note explaining what was inside the box, and that opening the box would either destroy the photo or object, or just destroy the art statement I was making.



Tiring of making boxes, I turned my attention back to photography. Way back. During 1976 and 1977, I made color gum bichromate pigment prints, a technique used in the late 1800's. I explored how these images could be manipulated, and how I could leave my fingerprints all over them. Additionally, they were very inexpensive to make.

This picture, and the ones on the following two pages, are of my second wife, Saint Jill. I met her in 1981 when I went back to college to study psychology. It was at that time that I bought my first computer, to help write class and research papers. I tried to explain to the professors what a word processor was, and with one an entire twenty page report didn't have to be retyped if a paragraph needed to be inserted or deleted near the beginning. They just looked at me like I was speaking Sanskrit. They just couldn't grasp the concept of a word processor.

I came to believe that some day it would be possible to make a photograph with a computer. I started hunting down everything I could find on what was then called either "electronic" or "computer" or sometimes "digital" photography. In 1988, a few years after I graduated with both a B.A. and M.A. in psychology, I bought my first computer that was capable of making a photograph. Well, it made some sort of an image, but it certainly wasn't a photograph. The computer system consisted of a TARGA-16 graphics board, and TIPS software, and later QFX software.

After being with Jill for about nine years, she too divorced me. The last I heard, she had earned a B.A and M.A in psychology, and an M.A. in anthropology. And she was working on her Ph.D. in cognitive psychology, specializing in psycho linguistics.

I was very sad for a long time, and drowned my sorrows by throwing myself into my art and the new field of digital photography. I tried to explain to just about everyone I knew about digital photography, and they just looked at me like I was speaking Sanskrit.

Oh! I want to mention that Jill once told me that she didn't like my photographs. I asked her why. She said "Because you're always cutting off parts of people's bodies." Everyone's a critic.





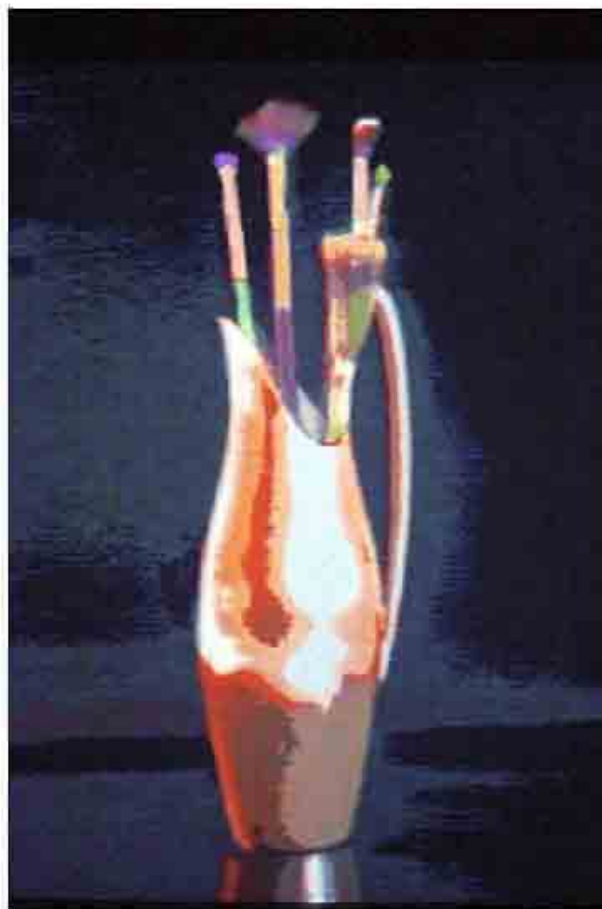


From 1988 to about 1995, the only ways I could get images into my computer were by video- either a live video image, a video taped image, or an image appearing on my television set. Quality and medium quality scanners didn't exist before the mid-late 1990's, and the low quality scanners which did cost many thousands of dollars. The entire video image file for my TARGA-16 graphics board consisted of 512 pixels by 480 pixels. A laughably tiny file by today's standards. Since color printers didn't exist, (except for the Tektronic which spit colored wax onto paper, yielding a rather strange looking image), the only way to get an image out of the computer was to take a picture of it off the monitor, or have a "service bureau", which was the computer artist's equivalent of a photo lab, put the image on film using an expensive "film recorder". And those images didn't look very good.

Well, once I got over wanting the images to look like photographs, I got to like the strange looking images I was making. Following are some of the surviving files I made from 1988 through 1995.

I spent hours (because the computers and software were soooo slow) learning what could be done with digital images. THEY COULD BE BENT! THEY COULD BE SUPERIMPOSED, things could be done with them that were impossible to do with traditional photography. Today, the things I did with amazement are kind of trite. That's how far digital photography has come in twenty years.

It wasn't long that I started teaching myself how to write computer programs. I learned to write "painterly" effects. After all, if the image didn't want to look like a photograph, I'd help it look like I knew it wanted to look like.





The caption below the pictures was placed into the file in 1988. I knew at that time very early digital photos/images would be rare, and possibly of historical interest.

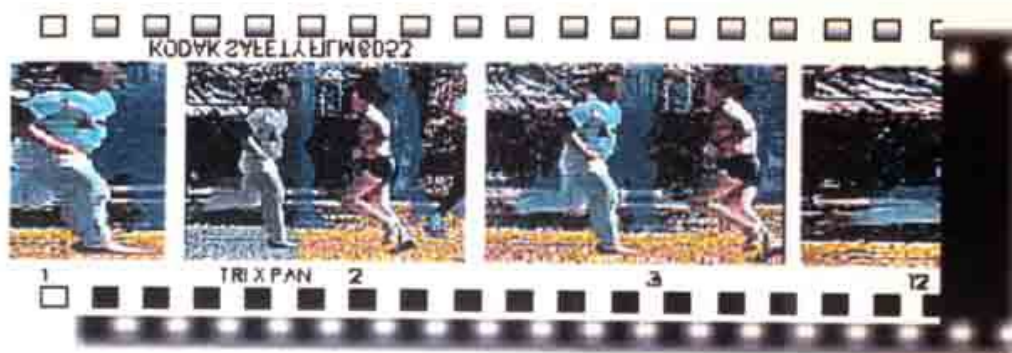
And just for the record, placing type back then was no where as easy as it is today.

Oh! Look at those drop shadows! I could make drop shadows! Kinda.

Selected 1988 video grabbed photographs, made with a TARGA-16 graphics board, TIPS and Ron Scott's QFX software.



And I could BEND an image! Something impossible to do with traditional photography.

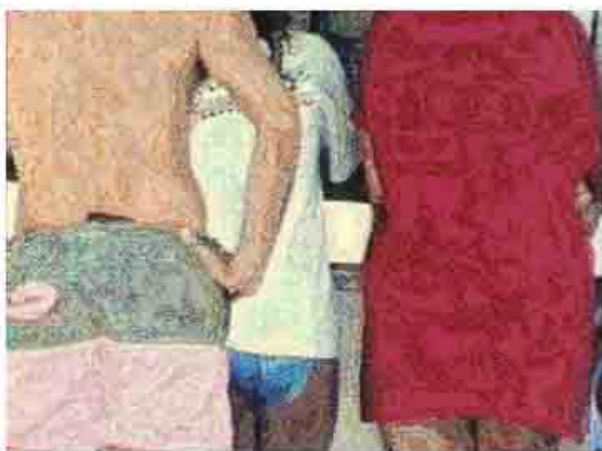








"At the beach" 1990



All 1990





1991



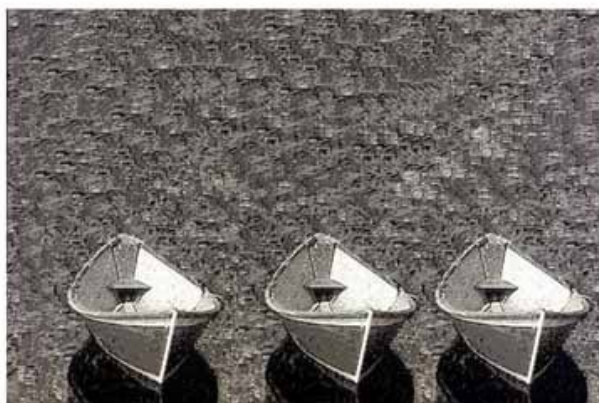
1892



1893



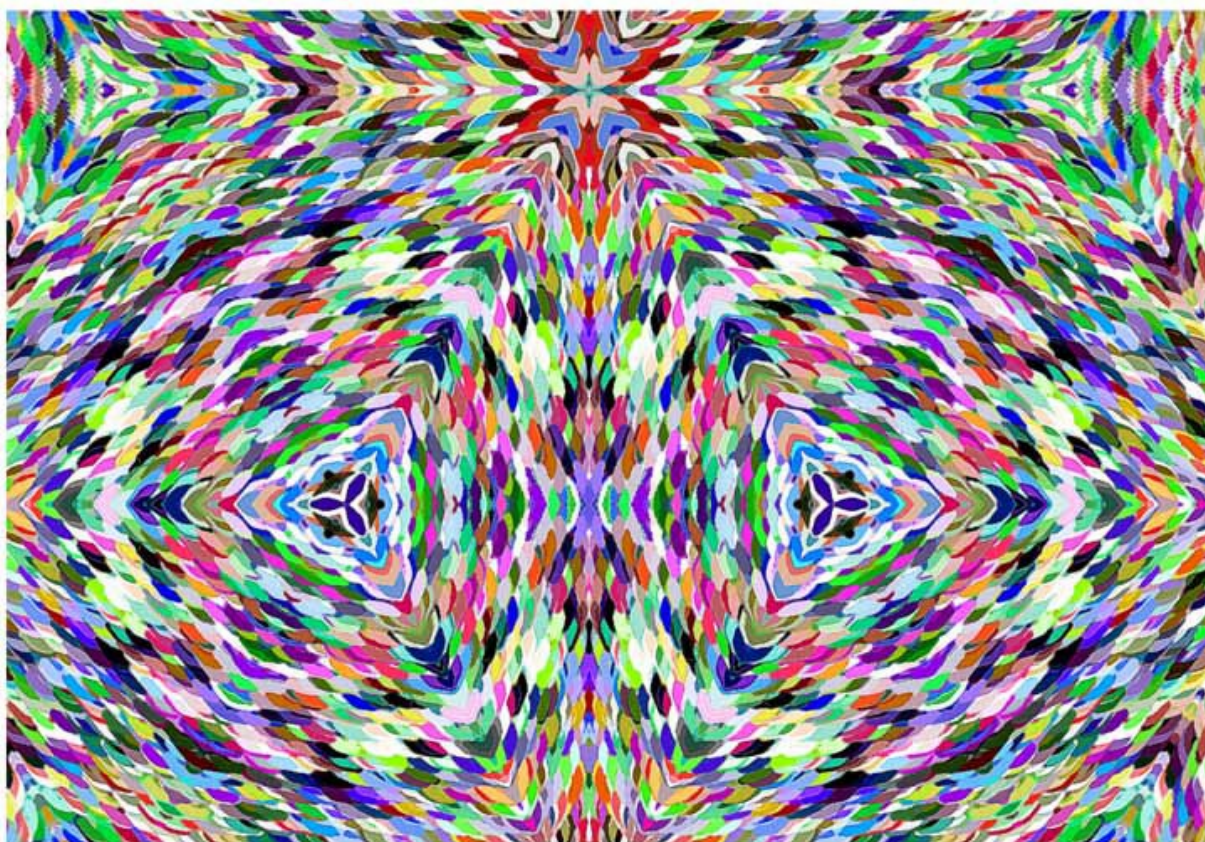
1993



1993 Seeing what can be done, and playing, and having fun.



1994



1994

You may have noticed that some of the images I've selected for this book are "mirrored". That is, one side is the same as the other, but reversed. The digital paintings on the previous two pages are examples of what this technique looks like.

In 1994 I bought a film scanner. It wasn't of high quality, but it created image files that were a few light-years ahead of using a video camera to put images into my computer, or paying for a bad scan of a print by a service bureau. With the ability to get better than mediocre digitized photos, I started investigating the possibilities of "mirrored" images of people.

The woman to the right is Marcy, a good friend of mine in the early 1990's. The picture of her shows that she's a normal looking person. I photographed her in various poses, and then mirrored them. To make the somewhat cumbersome process less tedious, I spent a week writing a program to do the mirroring automatically. Of course, a real computer programmer would have written the program in about ten minutes. The following few pages show what Marcy looks like mirrored.



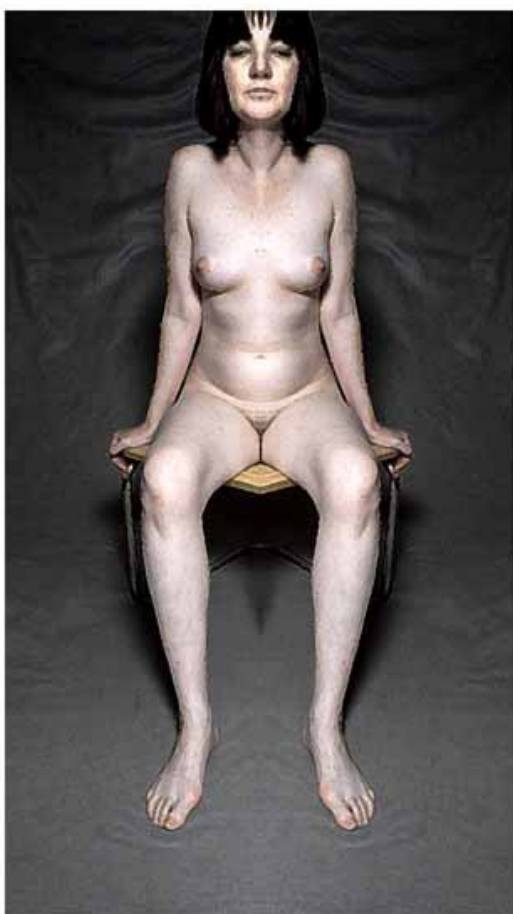


1994



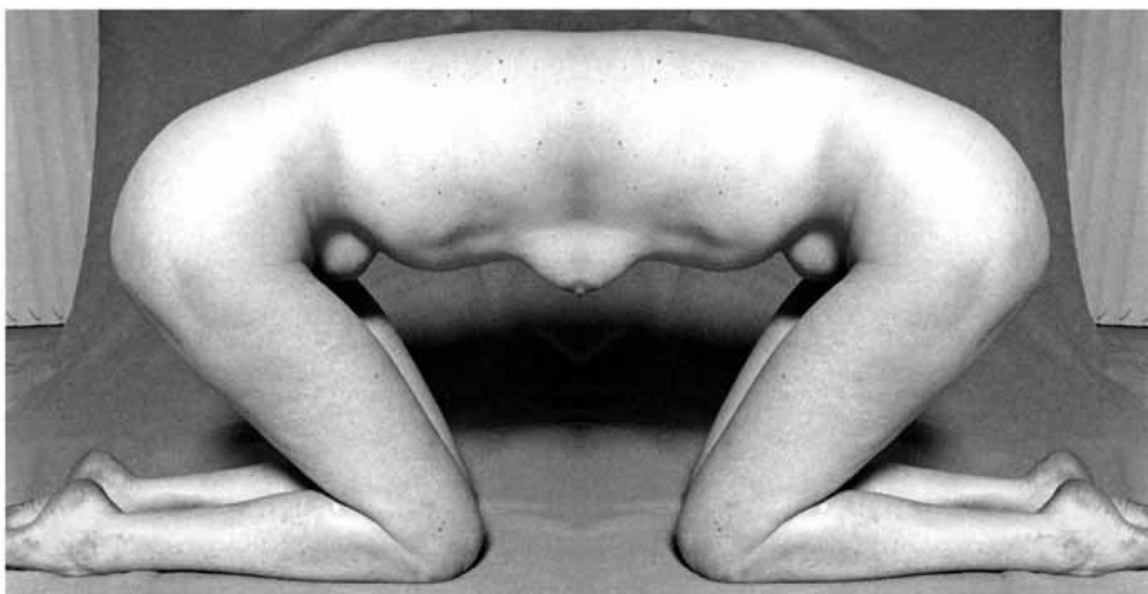
Digital photograph Norman Breslow, 9/23/94

(The above caption was in the original file.)



1994

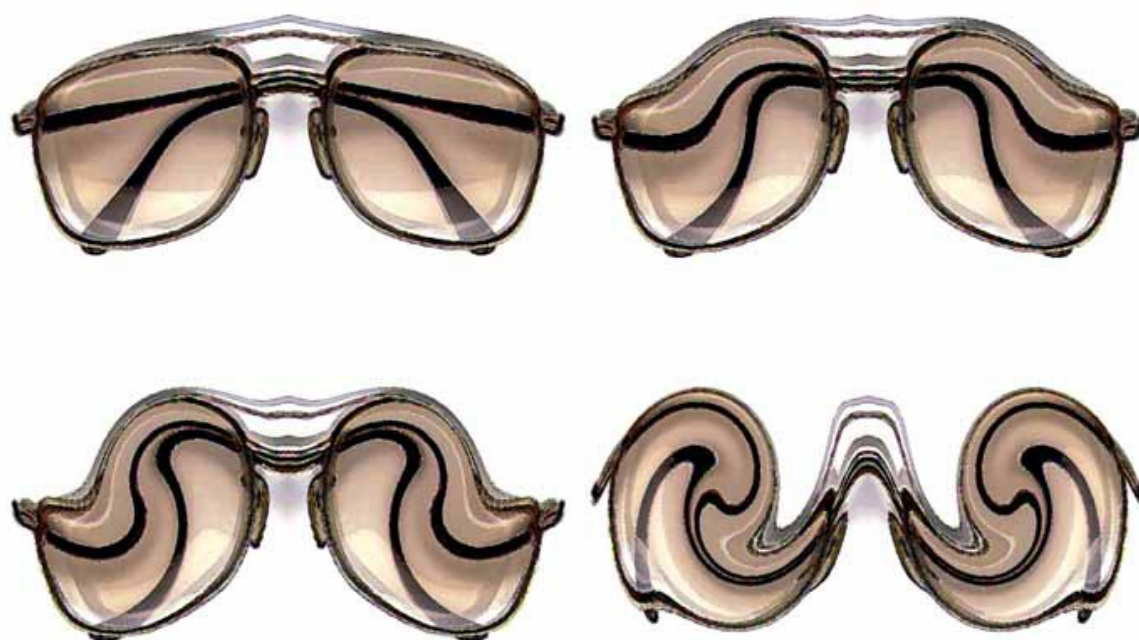




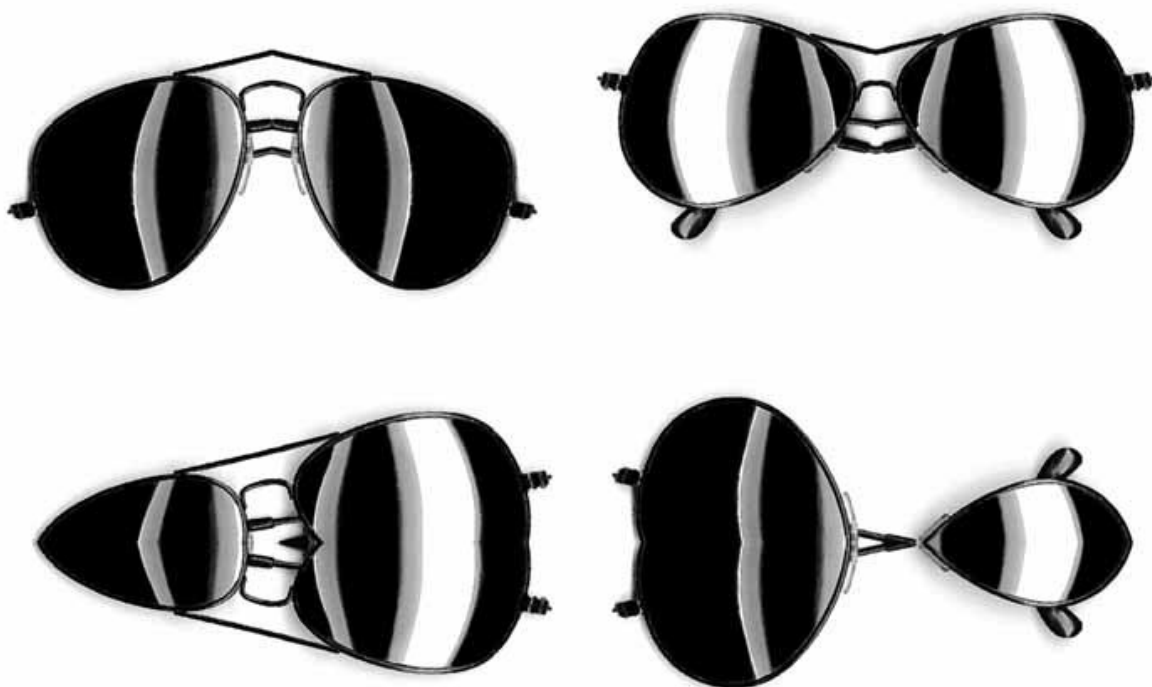
1994



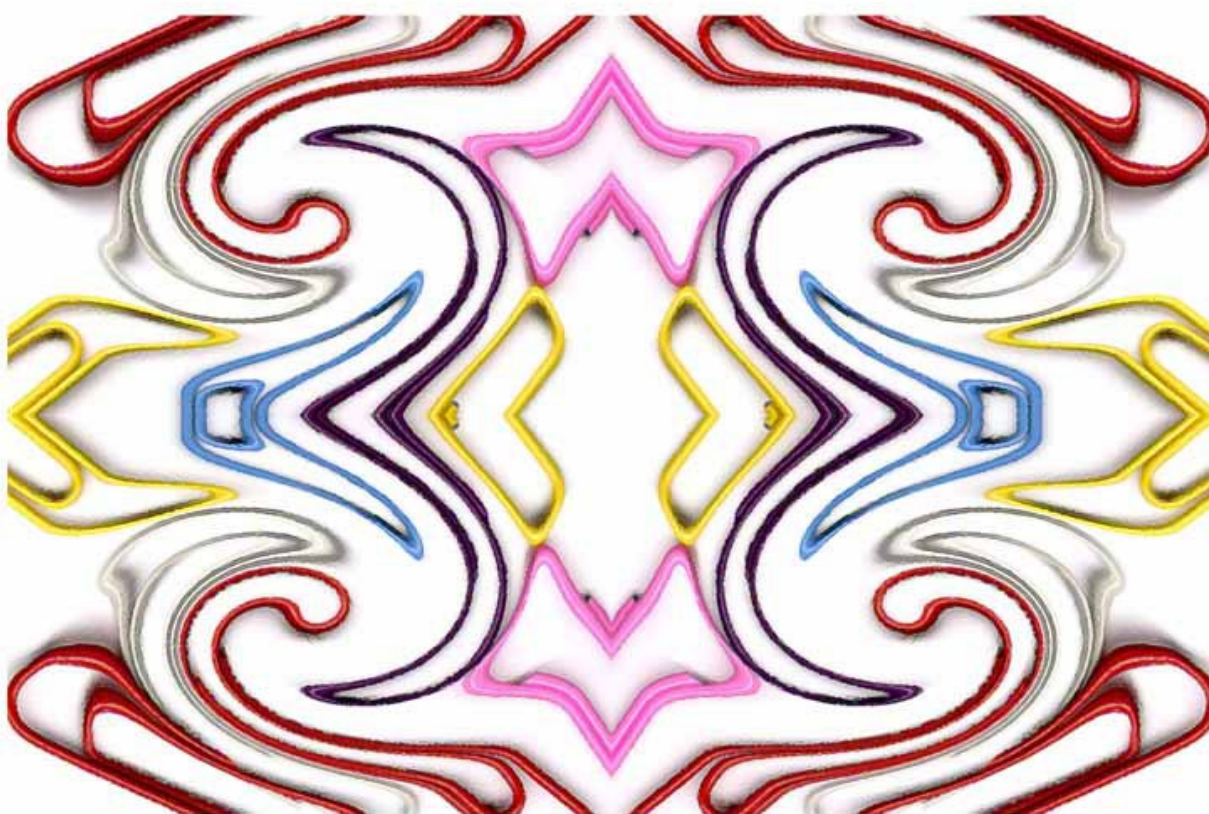
1995



1995



1995

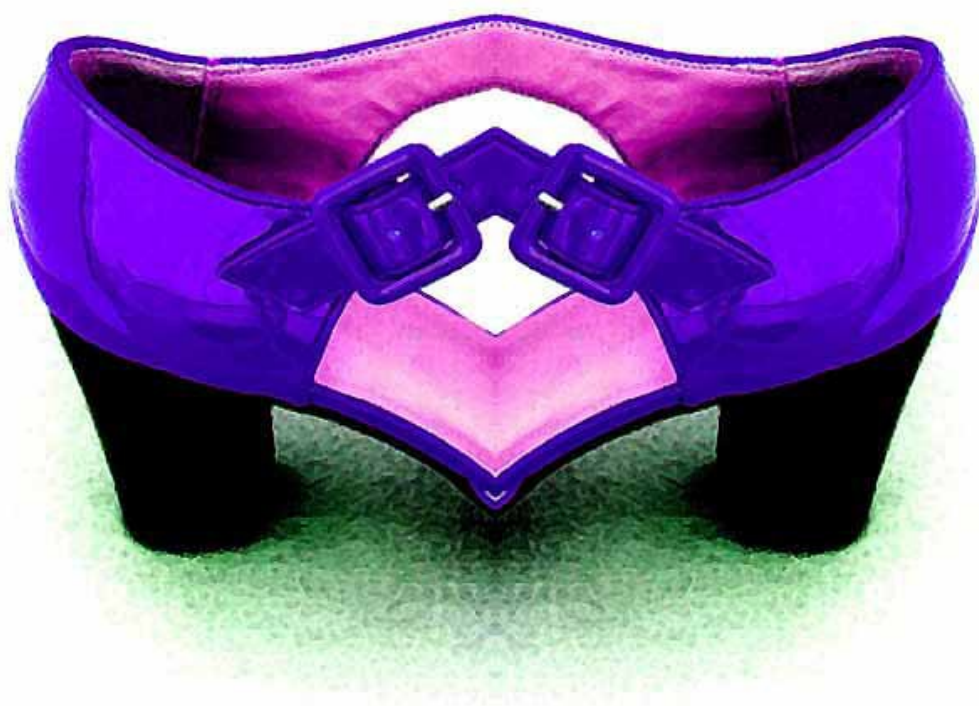


Digital photograph. Norman Breslow, 12/7/95.

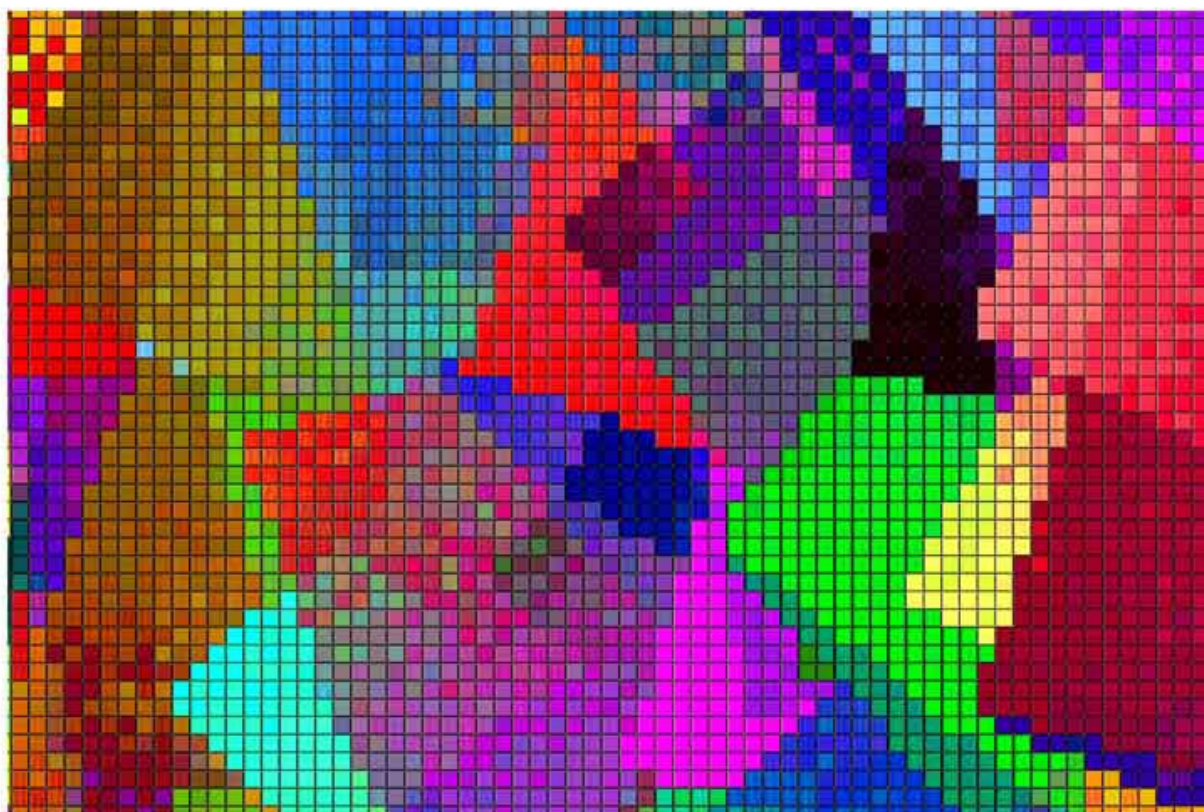
(Caption in original file.)



When I look at these shoes, I wonder what a person who could wear them would look like.



Digital photograph. Norman Breslow, 7/12/95. 818-894-3448 or artist@compuserve.com
(very old phone number and email address.)



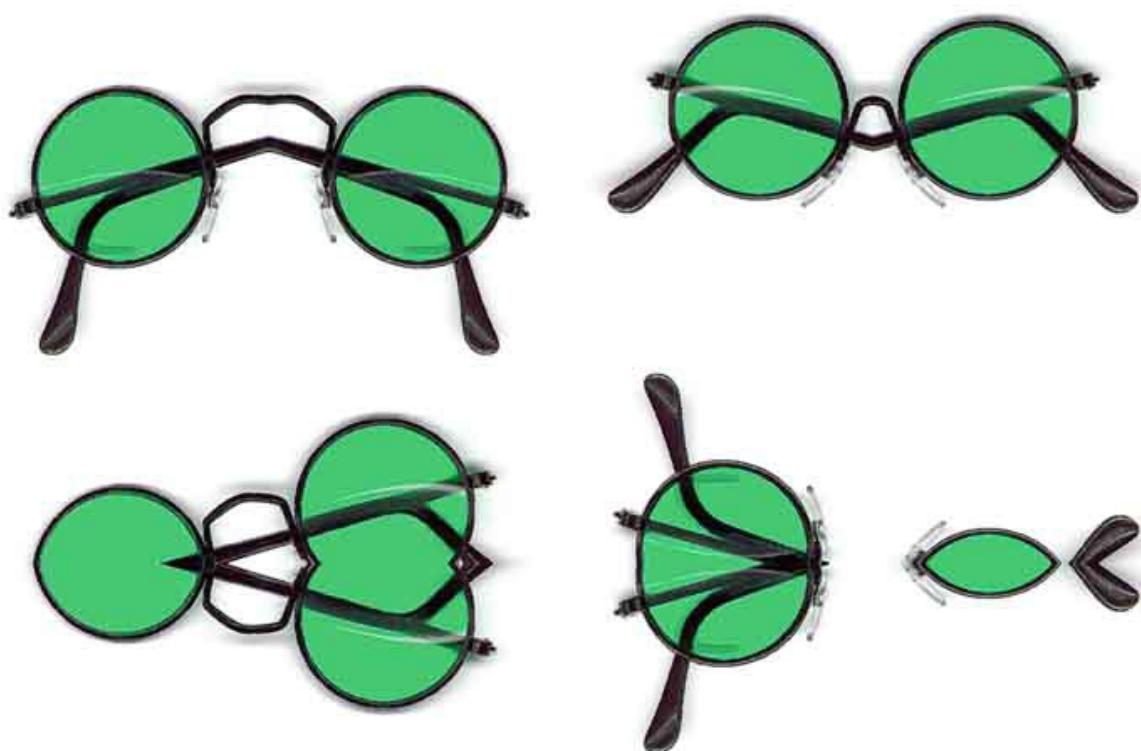
1995



1995



1996

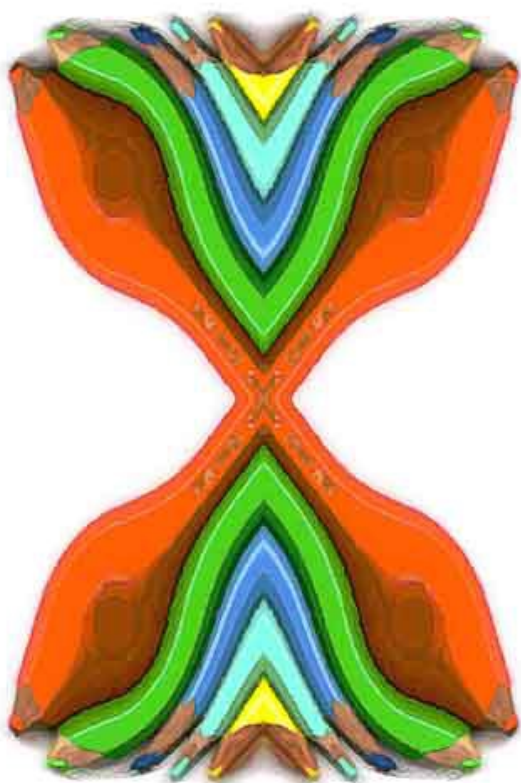




1996



1996



1996

Most of the time since I began working with digital photography, I felt like a kid in a candy store. True, there were periods of utter frustration, and problem solving, but then there were the many times I felt like a pioneer- I wondered if I was the first person to ever make the type of image I was working on.

While I still experiment with ways to create new types of visuals, I started to focus around the year 2000 to continuing to document the goings-on at some locations in the Santa Monica and Venice beach areas of Los Angeles.

I say continue to document, although I hadn't realized that I had been documenting that area since 1988. To get visuals into my computer with my video tape camera, I started going to the beach, and later I took my still camera there after I got a film scanner. Looking through my files, I realized that I had been shooting a series, without either intending to or knowing it.

There was still a lot of experimentation for me to do at the end of the 1990's, as some of the following images will show. And, as you will see shortly, there was a completely different project I had been working on since 1993.



"One of the Artists' hands"



1997



1997



1997



1997



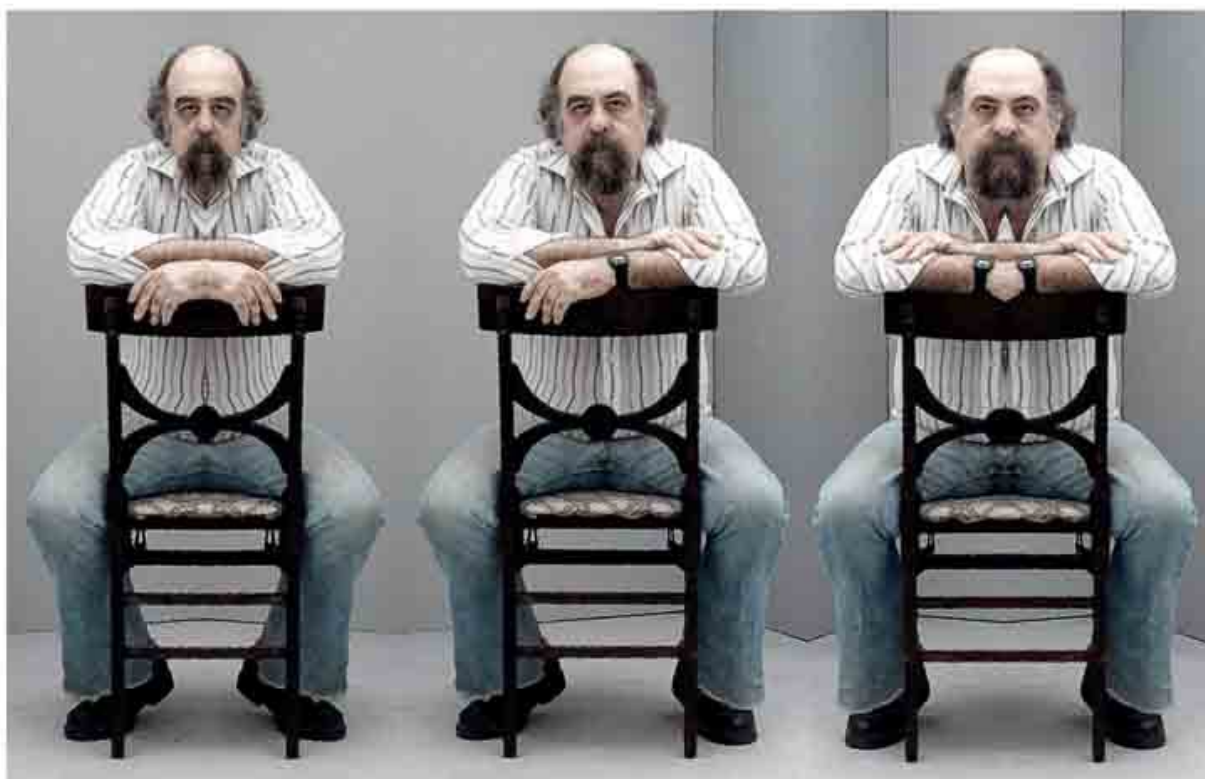
Sometime around 1993 I needed to give myself a diversion from teaching myself digital photography. I decided to start making my "boxes" again. I went to loading docks behind supermarkets to get the god-awful wood, and found that orange and apple crates were now made from plastic. Unsuitable for my boxes. I gave the situation some thought, and decided to use god-awful wrapping paper and tape and string. I continued to make these "parcels" through the 1990's, and I occasionally still do.

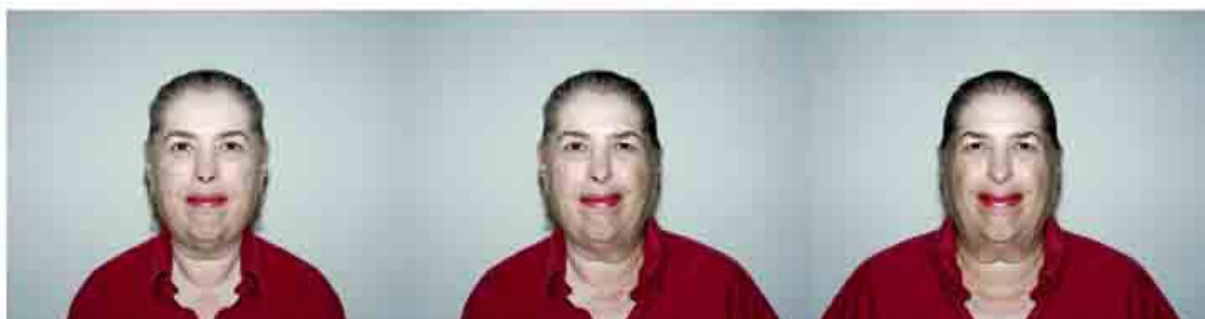
Sometime in the early 1990's I got a phone call from Jim, one of my artist friends from the 1970's. We'd call each other once or twice a year. Jim was the studio assistant to the famous artist, Ron Davis, for about 15 years, and through that job he met many high level art collectors and dealers. Occasionally he'd get one to come to his studio to look at his art.

Jim called to tell me that he had a heavy duty art collector over, who spotted my "box" which Jim had. It is the only surviving box that I know of. Jim told me that the collector stopped looking at his art, and talked to Jim about my box for an hour. He told Jim that it was the finest example of "that type" of art he had ever seen. I apologized to Jim for interfering with his showing his art. Jim said not-to-worry, because he was happy to talk about the art piece, which he has in his collection.

Anyway, I didn't know that there was "that type" of art, because I do not follow the art scene. I did show some of my boxes to some art dealers, and I suppose one or more told their boyfriends about the boxes, and told them to make them, and then they got promoted as being geniuses. So I was ripped off, again.







Gladys, my third, current, and hopefully last wife. She, too, is much too good for me.

The following unposed photographs were shot on film between 1988 and 2004, with a very old Nikon FM manual focus and manual exposure camera. In 2005 I switched to a Nikon D100 digital camera, with auto focus and auto exposure. Luxury! The pictures were made mainly in Santa Monica, Venice and West Los Angeles, California. The film images were scanned on a variety of god-awful overpriced scanners up to 2005, and then some were rescanned with a decent moderately priced scanner.

Because the earlier scanned files, and even earlier video grabbed files, didn't want to look like photographs, I taught myself to create computer programs and I wrote a few that created what could pass for painterly images. I still, at times, use these programs, and sometimes use store-bought programs that can create a "painterly effect", because I have come to like the non-photographic looking images, as much as I like the more standard photographic looking ones.

My objective, once I realized that I was shooting a series without knowing it, was to show how people sit, walk, talk to one another, play, flirt, gesture, sleep, read, and dress, in contrast to how art directors for movies and television and print depict people doing these things.

For those who want to put the photographs which follow into an historical photographic context, think of the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson. Said modestly, I believe my work compares favorably. For those whose knowledge of photography is enormous, compare my work to the street scene photographs of Peter Fink.

Near the end of 2002, I once again got bored with my art. Repeating myself over and over for years does that to me. I started to investigate Lenticular imaging, a method which allows the making of three dimensional images that look 3D without the viewer having to wear special glasses, or look at the image in a special viewing box, etc. Lenticular imaging is now (2007) at the stage where digital photography was in 1988 when I got involved with that. Lenticular is still somewhat crude, but over time improvements will be made in the supplies and computer programs used to create the images.

One current problem with Lenticular is that the images need to be fairly large to show decent 3D. This is because the 3D effect is an optical illusion, and a lot of information must be contained in the image to help your brain construct the illusion.

Two small fragments from larger images appear in the front and back inside covers. When looking at them, move your head slightly from side to side and notice how the images change. Try varying the distance you view the abstract on the inside back cover from a few inches to two feet.





















